

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MAY 15, 1896.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. WARREN, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 225.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred House bill 225, having carefully considered the same, beg leave to report it back and recommend that it do pass, amended as follows:

In line 6, section 1, strike out the words "transfer and turn over" and insert "lease at a nominal rent."

In line 12 strike out the word "transfer" and insert the word "lease."

The land, about 80 acres, upon which Fort Omaha is located, was originally donated to the United States by citizens of Omaha, Nebr. Fort Omaha is located about 4 miles from the business center of the city of Omaha. It is but fair to your committee to state that the act authorizing the construction of Fort Crook at a point about 10 miles from the business center of the city of Omaha was secured largely upon the representation of the Nebraska Congressional delegation that the land embraced in Fort Omaha was of great value for city purposes and could be sold by the United States for such an amount as would very nearly reimburse the Government for the moneys expended in the construction of Fort Crook.

Your committee are satisfied that such representations were so made in good faith and were justified at the time by the then prevailing prices of real estate in and adjacent to the city of Omaha. At that time said city, like all other important Western cities, was at the height of the boom period, and most extraordinary prices were asked and paid for real estate; and all the citizens of said city shared in the belief that values would continue to increase, and your committee believe that the great depreciation in the market value of the lands comprised in Fort Omaha could not have been reasonably anticipated by anyone. Your committee believe that at the time the bill was passed authorizing the building of Fort Crook the lands embraced in Fort Omaha could have been sold for from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per acre; but since that time the general depreciation in the business affairs and values of the country, which has been especially severe in the West, together with local drouth conditions and crop failures in the State of Nebraska and the vicinity of Omaha, have caused such a great falling off in the market values of real estate in the vicinity of said city that it is now very difficult, if not impossible, to make any sales of unimproved real estate or suburban property.

Your committee are thoroughly satisfied, from their investigation and from the statements and representations made to them by the Senators from Nebraska and other reliable citizens of said State, that there is at the present time no prospect of securing purchasers for the land in question at prices which the Government could afford to accept. The present value of the land, including the improvements thereon, is variously estimated at from \$40,000 to \$60,000 for the entire tract, and it is doubtful if the same could be sold at present or in the near future for the minimum amount. Under the law authorizing the construction of Fort Crook the Secretary of War is authorized to proceed with the sale of the real estate embraced in Fort Omaha upon the transfer of the post to Fort Crook. This transfer will be made in the near future. Your committee are advised by the War Department that the United States will have no further use for Fort Omaha for military purposes, and your committee are of opinion that with the transfer of the garrison to Fort Crook its abandonment will be permanent.

When Fort Omaha is abandoned the buildings, appurtenances, and improvements will immediately begin to deteriorate in value, and unless the Government shall protect it by maintaining a complete watch and guard over the entire property the buildings will speedily become disfigured and in process of time destroyed; windows will be broken, doors carried away, and it will be subject to devastation by fire and storm. Under these circumstances it is proposed to lease this property at a nominal rental to the State of Nebraska to be used as a place of rendezvous and school of instruction for the National Guard of said State until such time as the United States or the Secretary of War may again desire its use for military purposes, or until it may be deemed advisable to sell or otherwise dispose of it.

If the bill is passed the State of Nebraska will enter into possession of and maintain the grounds and buildings without expense to the United States, reporting annually to the Secretary of War in detail the uses of the said reservation so long as the State is permitted to use it for the purposes stated. Your committee believe that the maintenance of a military school of instruction by the State of Nebraska at the city of Omaha would be of great value to the United States, and would encourage and provide for the military education and discipline of the youths and young men of a large area of country.

In view of all which considerations your committee feel justified in recommending a different disposition of the grounds and buildings comprised in Fort Omaha from that which was recommended and provided for in the act of Congress authorizing the construction of Fort Crook.

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